10: Roscoe M-5 (ca. 1900)1915
FL11 Luo FL11

582
There are no restrictions as to the number of women a man may marry nor as to the number of his wife's sisters whom he may take to wife. Previous to her marriage a young woman may have as many lovers as she wishes, she is only careful to avoid incestuous connections. The unmarried women have their own quarters in a village and the young men theirs, and they seldom have any further intercourse than that of brothers and sisters; the young men, however, from another village pay visits to the young women during the day and make love to them, and in the evening the women return the men's visit and have sexual relations with them, while other young people sing songs of an obscene character and dance outside the house. Such intercourse is not stopped nor discountenanced by the elder people, as it is a recognised custom. Should any children be born from such relations, no punishment ensues nor are the couple blamed. When a father considers his son old enough to marry, he chooses a woman to be his wife. He then takes a cow and a goat to the parents of the young woman and arranges with them the amount to be paid for the marriage-fee. If the parents consent to the match, when an instalment of the fee has been paid, the bride is conducted by her friends to the home of the young man and lives with him as his wife for ten days: during this time there is daily singing and dancing outside the house where the bride and bridegroom reside, and they take part in the dances. At the end of ten days the bridegroom's parents give a feast to all those who have gathered, and after the feast the friends of the bride escort her back to her parents, who in turn give a feast to the people that accompany their daughter. The bride remains with her parents until her husband is able to obtain and pay the full sum asked for as the marriage-fee. During this time, while the bride is waiting for her husband to bring the marriage-fee, there is no obligation upon her to live a chaste life, and she is free to have as many lovers as before. When, however, the fee has been paid and the bride claimed, she ceases to live a loose life and becomes most chaste. The husband builds his house, either in or near his father's village, and his wife is brought thither. When a man marries

[595] 836 883 [848] 584 585 [837] 591

11: Hartmann M-5 (ca. 1900) 1928 FL11 Luo FL11

the ear of father, mother and child. 852
After 10 days later, on the day of the feast, the father's head is only shaven above the ear again. Those of mother and child, however, are shaven clear *(kwanyo nech)*. The feast is prepared much like for a baby-boy, but there is no *owinjo*, and the performance with the ladle does not take place. Neither is the woman ornamented like after the birth of a boy; because the girl later on will not belong to that part of the country; she will be married out and live and die elsewhere.

If the husband has more wives, he is not entitled to conjugal rights with 846
any of them until after the birth of a child the feast has taken place, and he has 834
slept again with the mother of the child. If he would brake this rule, the new-born babe would waste away and die *(omiyo nyathi chire)*.

Adultery is reckoned a serious offence by both husband and wife. If the 837
woman knows that her husband is misbehaving in this way, she will refuse 834
cohabitation, for if she is with a child cohabitations would result in a miscarriage. 684
If a woman commits adultery her husband may send her away, and claim the 848
dowry he has paid for her. However, if she brings forth a child born from adultery he will reckon the child to be his own, as the woman is his, nobody else's for he has properly married her.

A widow is given in marriage to the full brother or the nearest relation 587
of her deceased husband. If she goes to his full brother, or in case he had none, to his nearest relation, and if she bears children by him, then these children will be reckoned to be the children of her new husband. In case her deceased husband has a full brother but she does not like him, or he is still too young to take her as his wife, some other near relative will take the widow. But the children born by them will be called the children of the deceased husband. The present husband is only a borrowed one. Hence when the girls born to them grow up and get married, the real brother of the deceased husband will receive the full dowry paid for them minus one cow for the girl, which goes to the real father of the girl for bringing her up.

When the boys born by them grow up and get married they will leave [591]
the kraal and build their own apart, unless their real father helps them to get married by paying the dowry.

If a woman has given birth to twins, both she and her husband are not allowed to leave the hut at all for 20 days, not even for nature's call. A hole is dug 945
in the floor of the hut, and an old battered cooking pot is put over it, and this is 852
used as a W. C. During these 20 days new beer is brewed. When the time has [514]
elapsed and the beer is ready, a bull is killed and its hide is dried for the parents [273]
of the twins to sleep on. For on that day some old woman will take away the old hide, which they used for that purpose. The relations of the woman also kill a bull and brew beer, which they bring along to the village where the twins are born. After their arrival the father and the mother with the twins sit down near the entrance of the kraal, together with an old woman who beats a drum. The visitors from the woman's home, the people of the kraal and of all the neighbourhood in turn go up to the mother of the twins, who has got some white clay *(rongo or mgera)* mixed with water in a small vessel. She dips her finger in it and

20:Ominde I-5 (ca. 1948) 1952
FL11 Luo FL11

this attitude that unmarried girls, as they grow older, are often forced to marry in the end by taking advantage of the institution of polygamy, which acts as a final method of absorption. Although she may live to an advanced age, a single girl is continually tormented by the fact that society does not approve of unmarried girls.

Restrictions. Traditionally, a mature girl is not allowed to enter her father's or her mother's sleeping place, especially if the mother is still giving birth to children. This restriction, although generally ignored by Christians, applies also to the wives of her uncles. Those who are her parents or parents by marriage do not go where a girl receives her male visitors. By custom this hut was built beyond view of the parents' huts and served as a sleeping place for boys. It is considered that a girl who has commenced associating with men should not enter her mother's or father's hut because she would interfere with their powers of reproduction.

Relationship with brothers. The fear of incest has led to the practice of keeping young women's activities as separate as possible from those of their brothers, but free association and conversation concerning their mutual interests generally takes place, since brothers and sisters retain an interest in each others' love affairs. From his sisters, a young man may be informed of things he wishes to know about his girl friend.

Pre-marital pregnancy. Cases of pre-marital pregnancy were very rare in the past, according to most of my informants. But this rarity was not due to the fact that sexual relationships were prohibited. Pregnancy among mature girls was apparently not infrequent from any strict moral code, but from the conscious effort of the girls themselves to guard against it. Because much importance was attached to virginity, it was a matter of personal pride and was carefully guarded. It was a great honour and a

20:Ominde I-5 (ca. 1948) 1952
FL11 Luo FL11

source of much social rejoicing to discover that a married woman had been found to be a virgin. Such a bride was given a high prestige among the other women.

In the past, if a woman gave birth to an illegitimate child, her only chance of marriage was to an old man with a number of wives. There was no possibility of occupying the position of chief wife of the family; and the heads of cattle paid were much fewer. The child was taken by the man who legally married her, but she was not allowed to give birth in her own home. Everything was done to get rid of her as soon as possible.

Examples of such pregnancies are very common at present. But although social disapproval is still keenly felt, modern conditions have become more favourable to women in this situation, and an increasing number of them are being married to bachelors. Unlike some communities, no death punishment was ever given. If the occurrence takes place between close relatives the matter is kept secret; in the past, however, the couple could be exiled.

Modern Education and Adolescent Girls

Progress in the education of adolescent girls is hampered because the Luo people do not appreciate its suitability to the environment of their women. To the majority, modern education is associated with clerical work and the many other jobs that men take up after a school career. The position of girls in this scheme is not clearly envisaged.

The social importance attached to marriage is having to adapt itself to a prolonged school career and the raised age for marriage which this implies. An inability to appreciate schooling for girls is also based on a high esteem for the traditional education which it tends to interrupt and weaken.